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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI AND DRL; LONDON FOR TSOU; PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: DECL: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PGOV KU

SUBJECT: KUWAITI SHI'A MARCH TO CELEBRATE ASHOURA; GOK SECURITY  
FORCES PROVIDE PROTECTION

REF: A) KUWAIT 464 B) 05 KUWAIT 766

¶1. Kuwait's Shi'a community commemorated Ashoura on February 9 with an unlicensed two-hour march. According to GOK estimates, 10,000 Shi'as marched through the Rumaithiya neighborhood carrying signs paying tribute to Imam Hussein. They also re-enacted scenes from the battle of Karbala in which Hussein was killed. (Note: Shi'a believe that Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad, should have become Caliph (Leader) of the Muslim community. The Ashoura celebration commemorates his martyrdom. End Note.) Technically, any gathering of more than seven people requires a license in Kuwait. Despite the protest's lack of a permit, the GOK provided security and the evening's events passed without incident. Security was also provided in other areas of Kuwait where Shi'a gathered for Ashoura celebrations.

¶2. In 2004, the GOK for the first time allowed Shi'as to reenact publicly the martyrdom of Hussein. In 2005, the GOK denied permission for public reenactments against the backdrop of a tense security environment resulting from clashes between a terrorist cell and security forces (ref B).

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LEBARON